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PROTECTING YOUR WOODLAND FROM FIRE

A lone house in the middle of a forest, a subdivision on the edge of a pine plantation, homes surrounded by grassland – while each of these may seem like very different settings, they are all examples of the Wildland-Urban Interface.

Today, more and more people are moving into these wildland areas without adapting to the possible dangers around them. The addition of structures in areas that have been historically known to burn interrupts the natural cycle of wildfires, and creates a situation where structures can potentially become just another piece of burnable fuel in the event of a wildfire.

To protect your family and property, create a defensible space between your home and an oncoming wildfire. There are a number of simple steps that you can take to reduce the danger to you and your home from wildfire.

- Maintain access trails and roads. Well-maintained roads may slow the spread of a wildfire and allow fire suppression crews to more easily access your property and attack and suppress a wildfire.
- Remove or prune trees so that your driveway is at least 12 feet wide and 15 feet high. This will insure that firefighters can get to your home and outbuildings.
- As you work to create a trail system through your woodland, think about their value as firebreaks. To do this, you will need to remove or reduce flammable natural fuels such as grass and leaves.

Another way you can protect your home is by creating a fire-proof zone around it. Plan a defensible space extending 30 feet around your home as free of combustible fuel as possible.

- Create a fire-resistant landscape by using only deciduous plants.
- Prune the lower limbs of conifers and small trees near larger conifers to reduce “ladder” fuels, and help minimize the potential of catastrophic crown fires.
- Store woodpiles and other flammable materials at least 30 feet away from structures.
- Mow your lawn and keep all vegetation healthy and well-watered, especially during droughts and dry times of the year.
- Regularly clear the roof and gutters of needles, leaves, and other debris.

Finally, be careful with fire. Most wildfires start with a campfire, burning trash, or fireworks.

These are some simple things that you can do to protect your home and woodland from fire. Additional resources for further reading include **Wisconsin Forest Management Guidelines – Chapter 17, Fire Management** and the Department of Natural Resources publication **“Living With Fire – A Guide for Homeowners Living in the Wildland-Urban Interface.”**

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